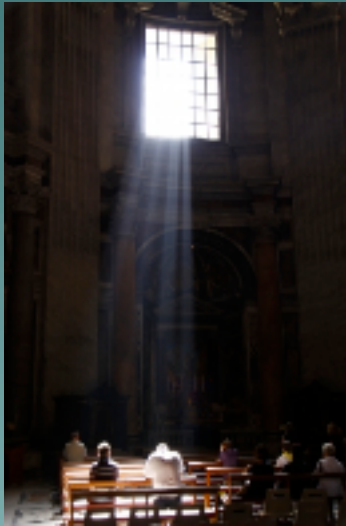


136 Rivers of water run
down from my eyes,
Because men do not
keep Your law.



Tsadde

137 **Righteous** are You, O LORD,
And upright are Your judgments.

138 Your testimonies, which You have commanded,
Are **righteous** and very faithful.

139 My zeal has consumed me,
Because my enemies have forgotten Your words.

140 Your word is very pure;
Therefore Your servant loves it.

141 I am small and despised,
Yet I do not forget Your precepts.

142 Your **righteousness** is an everlasting righteousness,
And Your law is truth.

143 Trouble and anguish have overtaken me,
Yet Your commandments are my delights.



144 The **righteousness** of Your testimonies
is everlasting;
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

Qoph

145 I cry out with my whole heart;
Hear me, O LORD!
I will keep Your statutes.

Tsadde notes

The key words here are *righteous* and *righteousness*, which each occur twice and are each applied both to the Lord and to his testimonies. God's testimonies mirror his righteousness, which is true both in fact and in the structure of the Tsadde section:

137 Righteous are You, O Lord

138 Your testimonies are righteous

142 Your righteous is everlasting

144 The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting

God's testimonies are, as Alexander Maclaren says, "a true transcript of that Divine righteousness." Even so, as God is eternal, so must his word be: "The beam must last as long as the sun."

The righteousness of God and his testimonies calls up a righteous response in the psalmist as well, as we see in the section's remaining verses: it inspires him to zeal (139), love (140), obedience (141), delight (143).

We can understand the word "pure" in vs. 140 as "refined" or "tested by fire" (ESV and NRSV, "well tried"; NIV, "thoroughly tested"). God's testimonies "have stood sharp tests, and, like metal in the furnace, have not been dissolved but brightened by the heat. They have been tested, when the psalmist was afflicted and found them to hold true" (Maclaren). They are "without dross," comments Andrew Bonar:

Pure gold. . . is said to be so fixed that an ounce of it set in the eye of a glass-furnace, for two months, did not lose a single grain.

Joshua testified to Israel (Josh. 23:14), and they said Amen to the testimony, tht not one good thing had failed of all that the Lord had spoken. His word of promised and of threatening cannot deceive, cannot disappoint, cannot come short of its declarations.

God's testimonies makes it through the fire; no word is lost, no promise unfulfilled, regardless of the difficulties faced by his people. And because we can trust it, we love it. "The unadulterated word has a right to the undivided heart" (W. Graham Scroggie).